

2016 Best Places to Live Methodology



The **2016 Best Places to Live rankings** are based on rigorous analysis of crime, public schools, cost of living, job opportunities, and local amenities to compare more than 10,000 U.S. towns and neighborhoods.

[View the 2016 Rankings →](#)

Where Our Data Comes From

[American Community Survey \(ACS\)](#) from U.S. Census Bureau

[Uniform Crime Statistics](#)
from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

[National Climatic Data Center \(NCDC\)](#)
from National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

[County and ZIP Code Business Patterns](#) from US Census Bureau

[Food Environment Atlas](#) from US Department of Agriculture

[Urban Neighborhood Boundaries and Statistics](#)

[Common Core Data and EDFacts](#)
from the U.S. Department of Education

Rankings Factors and Weights

| Factor | Description | Weight |
|--|--|--------|
| Cost of Living Grade | Based on area statistics for housing, food, and fuel costs. | 15% |
| Education Grade | Based on the percentage of the population with at least a Bachelor's degree. | 10% |
| Public Schools Grade | Based on the quality of the local school districts, measured using data from the U.S. Department of Education and surveys from students and parents. | 10% |
| Real Estate Grade | Based on area statistics measuring trends in housing prices, affordability, and homeownership rates. | 10% |
| Diversity Grade | Based on the area's socioeconomic and demographic composition according the U.S. Census data. | 7.5% |
| Health & Fitness Grade | Based on statistics measuring resident health, activity levels, and access to healthcare. | 7.5% |
| Nightlife Grade | Based on area's access to bars, restaurants and cultural amenities. | 7.5% |
| Shortest Commute Grade | Based on average commute times for the area's residents along with proportion of residents who walk, bike, or use public transportation. | 7.5% |
| Crime & Safety Grade | Based on crime rates for violent and nonviolent crimes according to the FBI Uniform Crime Reports. | 5% |
| Family Amenities Grade | Based on an area's access to parks, libraries, cultural activities, and outdoor amenities. | 5% |
| Jobs Grade | Based on area statistics measuring unemployment, business growth, employment growth, and economic stability. | 5% |
| Outdoor Activities Grade | Based on the area's access to recreational opportunities and proximity to state and national parks and forests. | 5% |
| Weather Grade | Based on statistics measuring days of sunshine, precipitation, and seasonal temperatures. | 5% |